



The Good Food Bag Toolkit

**Lessons Learned From a
Farm to Preschool Pilot Program—and
How to Apply Them in Your own Community**



THE FARM TO TABLE PARTNERSHIP



Washington
State Department of
Agriculture



Public Health
Seattle & King County

Acknowledgements

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Educare School of Greater Seattle
Refugee & Immigrant Family Center
Tiny Tots Development Center

Further information

For more information about the Seattle Good Food Bag Pilot and the [Farm to Table Program](#), contact Natalie Thomson, City of Seattle Human Services Department, Youth and Family Empowerment Division (206-684-0840 or Natalie.Thomson@seattle.gov).

Think local

The recommendations and models described in the *Good Food Bag Toolkit* are based on local experiences and regulations governing food safety, philanthropy, and contractual commitments. Consult with your local public health department or other applicable public agencies when developing programs in your community.

Copies

Download this publication at www.agingkingcounty.org/FarmToTable/.

The Good Food Bag Toolkit

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Preface

Good Food Bags contain fresh produce, recipes, and tips to make it easier for lower-income young children and their families, of all backgrounds, to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables. The low cost bags are distributed through community organizations.

Our Good Food Bag Pilot Program was part of a multipronged strategy to:





-  Increase access to fresh, seasonal produce.
-  Set the stage for lifelong healthier food choices among lower-income preschool-aged children and their families.
-  Improve health and reduce the incidence of diet-related diseases.
-  Empower communities by supporting local farmers and the local economy.

The Toolkit is based on the experiences of three Seattle, Washington-based child care agencies serving vulnerable families, with input from nonprofit and government agency partners.

Who is this Toolkit for?

The Toolkit is geared to staff of child care agencies—from meal coordinators, nutrition aides, and managers to teachers, fiscal personnel, and volunteers. It may also be relevant to faith-based organizations, family centers, subsidized housing communities, and other community-based groups that work with underserved groups.

We provide nuts and bolts tips gleaned from our early review of pioneering programs in Canada and our own local experiences. We hope this Toolkit will help your agency think about whether or not a Good Food Bag program is feasible, and shed light on core questions such as:

-  Is my agency poised to launch a GFB program?
-  What are the core concepts, competencies, and program components?
-  What were the “success factors” in the Seattle-area pilot that might inform the design of a program in my city?
-  What challenges and opportunities emerged from the Seattle experience?

A Tale of Green Smoothies, Gardens, and Good Food Bags



To ramp up interest in farm-fresh produce, a Good Food Bag program coordinator blended green smoothies for tasting during an outreach visit. The kids loved the green concoction ... despite witnessing the addition of kale and spinach to the mix.

Later, one of the mothers was considering whether the \$5 Good Food Bag was too much on her limited budget. During a neighborhood stroll with her daughter, she experienced an “aha” moment.

Mother and child came upon a kale plant in a neighbor’s garden. “Mom, can we make smoothies!?” At that moment, the mother knew she had to keep purchasing the weekly bag for her family.

This is one of many teachable moments from the 2013 Good Food Bag Pilot Project in the Pacific Northwest.

Our purpose in writing this Toolkit is to provide accessible, hands-on information to support others who want to create a similar program in their own communities.

How to use the Toolkit

Many readers will first review the “how-to” content, later returning to other sections. Others will want background information before jumping into hands-on activities or takeaways. Feel free to explore the document, as the spirit moves, perhaps using the search function for specific content.

The Toolkit is divided into three sections:

- I. [Roots & Seeds: Laying The Groundwork](#) gives perspective on the genesis of the pilot including local food system policy and funding—with a nod to the family support, development, and health contexts in which a child care-sited Good Food Bag program takes place.
- II. [Cultivation: Developing the Pilots](#) summarizes the experiences of three child care centers that developed a Good Food Bag Program and highlights common themes that emerged from the collective experience of the Farm to Table Partnership.
- III. [Harvest: Starting a Good Food Bag Program](#) gets down to the nitty-gritty, exploring the experiences of each child care agency, highlighting key takeaway points. Glean tips for assessing capacity to develop a GFB program in your area and implementation pointers.



Throughout the document, you'll find hyperlinks to relevant websites, samples of forms, and marketing materials to inspire you. Finer details of the program elements and lessons learned from each child care agency are in [Appendix C](#).

Frequently used acronyms and terms

Certain terms and abbreviations appear repeatedly throughout the document:

F2T

Farm to Table—a community partnership to bring affordable fresh local

produce to children in Seattle and King County to reduce health disparities; improve nutritional status and food security; strengthen the local economy through job creation and support of local farmers; and build community. The Good Food Bag Pilot grew out of the [Farm to Table Partnership](#).

Food Hub

A regional food hub is “a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand” (working definition used by U.S. Department of Agriculture).

Additional abbreviations:

CDC—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

CSA—Community Supported Agriculture

EBT—Electronic Benefits Transfer

SNAP—Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as “food stamps”

Updates and opportunities since the GFB pilot

Since the close of the Good Food Bag pilot, interest in developing more GFB programs locally has skyrocketed. Two of the three child care agency pilots are continuing their programs. And, as of fall 2014, over 20 groups are planning or have already started a program of their own.

Changes in federal law enhance access to fresh produce. [More flexible options](#) are available for use of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards held by Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) enrollees. For example, these can now be used at approved farmers markets. Locally, one of the child care agencies that participated in the GFB pilot is testing the use of an EBT point of sale device on site.

And since June 2014, the amount available for purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables by low-income women enrolled in the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program has [increased by 30 percent](#).

We hope that similar momentum and excitement about increasing food access, supporting vulnerable children and families, and all the other benefits of a Good Food Bag program will take hold in other communities.



Sample Flyer from a Good Food Bag Child Care Agency Pilot Site

Section I

Roots & Seeds: Laying the Groundwork

Sufficient access to fresh fruits and vegetables is an enduring dilemma in our country. One barrier is affordability. The lack of nearby full-service grocery stores—known as “food deserts”—is another.

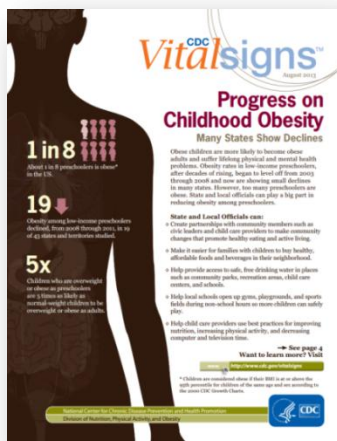


According to an analysis of a large [nationwide household survey](#), access to fresh, affordable produce deeply affects lower-income households—especially those with children. Black and Hispanic households, in particular, face an uphill climb.

Among households with children, at least 10 percent of survey respondents in 21 states said it was hard to get affordable fresh fruits and vegetables. And while the numbers vary from place to place, no part of the country is untouched by this problem. Programs and policies to address these barriers are essential. But the survey analysts emphasize that an even greater push is needed to increase the ability of families to purchase healthier foods through expansion of federal programs, such as SNAP and WIC.

In June 2014, the WIC program increased the dollar amount available to recipients for purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables. And more and more farmers markets around the country are exercising the option to install EBT technology for use by SNAP recipients. Improving access in these ways to fruits and vegetables ties to another key survey finding: those with the greatest difficulty accessing fresh produce reported the worse health status, including obesity.

Media coverage of America’s obesity epidemic—and the corresponding increase in the number of children who are overweight and obese—has captured the public eye. Extra weight and obesity in childhood increases the likelihood of early onset diabetes and other chronic conditions in adulthood—and social stigma throughout life.



Private and public agencies have honed their sights on the problem. The federal government increased commitments to states and cities through such agencies as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Some observers believe that efforts to reverse the childhood obesity trend is yielding measurable results, particularly in preschool-aged children—the focus of this Toolkit. The research findings, however, are inconclusive and subject to varying interpretation, depending on the timeframe studied and other factors.

Overall data can look promising, but progress may be muted or even stagnant when studying subgroups such as people of color or those living in poverty. For example, a [CDC study](#) looking at an eight-year period showed obesity reduction in school-aged children in places like Anchorage, Philadelphia, New York City, and King County, Washington. In other states, obesity rates actually increased.

Ultimately we need to sustain and build on positive trends and implement targeted programs for those groups most deeply affected by poverty and food insecurity. Progress in reducing overweight and obesity is uneven across the country and inequities persist.

Food Security

When “all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritional food to maintain a healthy and active life”

Food security is a complex concept that is linked to social, environmental, & economic development.

Core Elements

- Enough food is consistently available.
- Individuals & families have the resources to get sufficient food for good nutrition.
- The use of food shows a basic understanding of nutrition and related factors such as sanitation and enough water.

Adapted from proceedings of the World Food Organization’s (WFO) World Food Summit of 1996

Roots of the Farm to Table and Good Food Bag Programs

While efforts to address childhood obesity have been underway for years in the Pacific Northwest (Seattle–King County in Western Washington), the year 2010 marked a turning point. That year, commitment became more strategic and comprehensive.

Several groups got together to develop new ways to educate and engage individuals, forge new partnerships with a range of groups—including small farms—and apply a unique approach to providing fresh, locally sourced produce to:



Children and families at child care agencies.



Seniors at nonprofit agencies where older adults gather to share meals and enjoy daily activities.

The City of Seattle Human Services Department received CDC funding awarded by our local health department, Public Health—Seattle & King County. The Farm to Table (F2T) Partnership in Seattle and King County used the grant to enhance nutrition and food access.

F2T was implemented by two divisions of the City of Seattle Human Services Department that contract with group meal sites for older adults and licensed early learning–child care agencies for a variety of services.



Farm to Table (F2T): A federally funded program that connects City of Seattle-supported preschool, child care, and senior meal sites with local farmers.

In addition to continuing to ensure basic federal nutrition standards were met in child care settings, federal funding allowed the City of Seattle to add healthier foods to the usual fare, assist in food preparation, promote healthy eating, and develop relationships with local farms.

Fresh is best

The [F2T Program](#) increased access to fresh, local produce to low-income children and older adults by linking City-supported licensed child care agencies and senior meal programs to local farmers through a mix of purchasing and distribution models.



Online ordering for direct delivery via a [Farm to Table store](#).



Purchasing directly from a farm or through a food hub.



Subscribing to a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program by prepaying for farm-fresh produce and picking it up at a designated time and location.

A second CDC-funded grant was awarded to the City in 2012 by Seattle Children's—the premier regional children's hospital. This additional funding—along with dedicated funds and in-kind support from the City of Seattle—enabled the F2T Program to expand and continue obesity prevention activities by increasing access to fresh produce.

A perennial F2T theme is the reduction of health disparities.

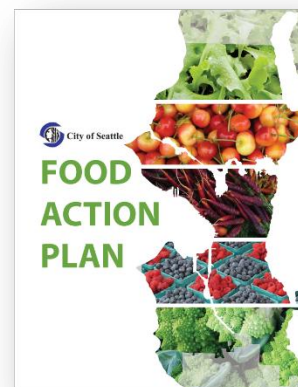
Fertile Policy Environment and Commitment to Reducing Inequities

The success of F2T and similar programs hinged, in part, on a supportive policy climate that raised obesity, economic development, food access, and sustainability issues to the forefront in local government.

The F2T Program aligned with [City of Seattle policy](#) to increase access to affordable, local, healthy, sustainable, and culturally appropriate food in preschool, child care, and senior meal sites where Seattle and King County's most underserved residents gather. The program targeted geographic areas where agencies serve a highly diverse population.

Sustainability refers to policies and behaviors that reduce the rate of depletion of environmental, economic, and social resources.

Key factors contributing to success were a positive relationship between the City and the health department, a commitment to engaging the local community in developing and implementing programs, and an explicit acknowledgement of the disparate impact of food inequities on communities of color, low-income citizens, children, and older adults.



Seattle Food Policy Milestones

- 2008** Seattle City Council passes an initiative to improve the local and regional food system
- 2009** Food interdepartmental team created to coordinate work in cross-cutting programs across City government
- 2012** First City food policy advisor guides community outreach to set priorities, from improving access to healthy food for all to supporting the local economy and “growing local.”

City embeds food policy into comprehensive planning, revealing links between food systems and land use, transportation, housing, economic development, the environment, and human development and well-being.
- 2013** Nutrition and physical activity best practices added to City contracts with several licensed preschools.

Positive political will, along with rich agricultural resources in the region and a history of urban gardening, boosted the success and expansion of the F2T Program and its offspring, the Good Food Bag Pilot.

The Social, Family, and Research Contexts



Targeting preschool-aged children

Although the obesity epidemic among young children is beginning to plateau in a few cities, the overall numbers argue for continued efforts to safeguard and support preschool-aged children.

According to the Institute of Medicine (IOM), 21.2 percent of children aged 2–5 in the United States are overweight or obese. The IOM notes that diets rich in fruits and vegetables are one avenue to potentially reduce the likelihood of child overweight and obesity. Nipping overweight and obesity in the bud is important because this weight pattern in young children tends to persist into adulthood.

Maximizing child health is just one element in laying the foundation for achieving the best in family well-being. The principles of [family support](#) and [childhood development](#) place a priority on:



A big picture lens to build a strong foundation for parents and children.



Prevention-focused programs that are integrated, community-based, and consider both the needs *and* assets of parents.



Basic needs such as food, housing, health care, and education.



Families as partners to drive programs and services.



Culturally and linguistically responsive framework to guide decisions and programs.

Encouraging healthy eating habits with children early in life can instill good choices and cement behaviors that later become second nature. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) stresses the pivotal role that parents play as [role models](#) and suggests ways in which they can do so (such as introducing new foods one at a time at the beginning of a meal when children are hungry).

New research looks at preschool-aged children

Exciting health and diet-related research was published in 2014 that focused on preschool-aged kids, an understudied group compared to older children and teens.

One study compared strategies to increase vegetable consumption among young children in a preschool setting ([Correia](#)). It found, in part, that children were more likely to eat vegetables for snacks than at lunch. The findings are preliminary, but suggest promising strategies for preschool programming.

Another [study of overweight and obese preschool-aged kids](#) in a pediatric primary care setting found that weight loss is truly a



family affair. Participants in the study had better results when children and parents were treated at the same time, upending the traditional view of focusing only on the child.

Nutrition and learning

The profound influence of nutrition on physical and psychological health is recognized in the scientific community, but research that clearly explains how nutrition affects brain development and learning in toddlers is limited. In fact, available research is slanted toward the impact of nutrition deficits on infants and school-aged children. Researchers are now trying to unravel nutrition and learning connections for the preschool-aged child too ([Rosales, Reznick](#)).




Despite research limitations, we know that children who do not have enough food during the early years may experience slower development and are at greater risk of developing chronic illness. ([Kirkpatrick](#)).

A paradox? Co-existence of overweight and not enough food

Since the 1990s, researchers and food policy experts saw an ironic connection. Kids living in “food insecure” households are more likely to be overweight than their “food-secure” counterparts. It’s thought that this dynamic comes from eating cheaper foods and higher-calorie foods and overeating when food is more available, perhaps early in the month when receiving food stamps or other assistance.


10 tips
Nutrition
Education Series

be a healthy
role model for children
10 tips for setting good examples



You are the most important influence on your child. You can do many things to help your children develop healthy eating habits for life. Offering a variety of foods helps children get the nutrients they need from every food group. They will also be more likely to try new foods and to like more foods. When children develop a taste for many types of foods, it's easier to plan family meals. Cook together, eat together, talk together, and make mealtime a family time!

- show by example**
Eat vegetables, fruits, and whole grains with meals or as snacks. Let your child see that you like to munch on raw vegetables.
- go food shopping together**
Grocery shopping can teach your child about food and nutrition. Discuss where vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy, and protein foods come from. Let your children make healthy choices.
- get creative in the kitchen**
Cut food into fun and easy shapes with cookie cutters. Name a food your child helps make. Serve “Janie’s Salad” or “Jackie’s Sweet Potatoes” for dinner. Encourage your child to invent new snacks. Make your own trail mixes from dry whole-grain, low-sugar cereal and dried fruit.
- offer the same foods for everyone**
Stop being a “short-order cook” by making different dishes to please children. It’s easier to plan family meals when everyone eats the same foods.
- reward with attention, not food**
Show your love with hugs and kisses. Comfort with hugs and talks. Choose not to offer sweets as rewards. It lets your child think sweets or dessert foods are better than other foods. When meals are not eaten, kids do not need “extras”—such as candy or cookies—as replacement foods.
- focus on each other at the table**
Talk about fun and happy things at mealtime. Turn off the television. Take phone calls later. Try to make eating meals a stress-free time.
- listen to your child**
If your child says he or she is hungry, offer a small, healthy snack—even if it is not a scheduled time to eat. Offer choices. Ask “Which would you like for dinner: broccoli or cauliflower?” instead of “Do you want broccoli for dinner?”
- limit screen time**
Allow no more than 2 hours a day of screen time like TV and computer games. Get up and move during commercials to get some physical activity.
- encourage physical activity**
Make physical activity fun for the whole family. Involve your children in the planning. Walk, run, and play with your child—instead of sitting on the sidelines. Set an example by being physically active and using safety gear, like bike helmets.
- be a good food role model**
Try new foods yourself. Describe its taste, texture, and smell. Offer one new food at a time. Serve something your child likes along with the new food. Offer new foods at the beginning of a meal, when your child is very hungry. Avoid lecturing or forcing your child to eat.



United States
Department of Agriculture
Center for Nutrition
Policy and Promotion

Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov for more information.

DG TipSheet No. 12
June 2011
USDA is an equal opportunity
provider and employer.

Encouraging healthy eating habits with children early in life can instill good choices and help cement behaviors that later become second nature.

Section II

Cultivation: Developing the Pilots

The Good Food Bag Program goal was to develop and test a cooperative purchasing system to buy produce at wholesale prices and provide families an easy way to purchase fresh, low-cost pre-bagged fruits and vegetables at agency sites—where children and parents naturally gather.



How the Good Food Bag Pilot Worked

The GFB Pilot Program was one element of a multifaceted Farm to Table Program in Seattle, Washington. The goal was to develop and test a cooperative purchasing system to buy produce at wholesale prices and provide families an easy way to purchase fresh, low-cost pre-bagged fruits and vegetables at agency sites—where children and parents naturally gather. The pilot was launched in 2013 at three licensed child care facilities. A fourth senior meals site pilot was also developed for a 2014 launch.

A technical assistance provider agency partnered with each agency and the [City of Seattle Human Services Department](#) also provided support. The main technical assistance partners were the [Northwest Agriculture Business Center](#) (NABC), [King County Housing Authority](#) (KCHA) and [Seattle Tilth](#).

Each child care site set up and ran their GFB program in a way that matched their organization's operations, client mix, resources, and funder requirements.

Below is a summary, with brief take-home points, of each Good Food Bag pilot at three

child care agencies in Seattle—Educare School of Greater Seattle, Tiny Tots, and the Refugee and Immigrant Family Center.

Each child care site serves underserved, diverse families with preschool-aged children. The assistance provided and background of the agency partners varied from site to site.

Partner agency types:



County public housing organization



Small farm business development



Educational group focused on food system equity which operates several urban farms and gardens



Three Pilot GFB Child Care Sites

Following are key observations from each Good Food Bag pilot. More in-depth information on each child care agency GFB program is in [Appendix C](#).

Educare Good Food Bag Program

The Educare School of Greater Seattle's Good Food Bag Program was designed and implemented by several staff including a manager, meals coordinator, nutrition aide, and a parent volunteer.

Advice from two technical assistance partner agencies—King County Housing Authority and Northwest Agriculture Business Center—was key due to the specialized nature of their expertise and limitations on Educare staff time. One partner agency expedited the award of a one-time grant from a local foundation to support the GFB pilot. Another partner brought prior GFB experience to the table.

Educare GFB Program Partners



Educare School of Greater Seattle

www.educareseattle.org

Educare School of Greater Seattle—established in 2010—is part of a national network of Educare sites seeking to inform policy and system change in early learning through research and best practices.

The agency offers innovative early learning programs to help prepare kids for school, serving children and families who are eligible for Head Start and several state-funded child care programs for lower-income families.

Educare is operated by the Puget Sound Educational Service District, one of nine regional educational agencies serving school districts and state-approved private schools in Washington.

Educare is housed in a modern building near a low-income housing campus in White Center, an area in Southwest Seattle.



King County Housing Authority

www.kcha.org

The King County Housing Authority (KCHA) provides rental housing and rent assistance to low and moderate income households in over 30 cities in King County, Washington (excluding Seattle).

KCHA owns and manages over 3,000 units of federally-funded housing for families, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

The agency receives public funds and partners with community and nonprofit organizations to assist low- and moderate-income individuals and families in King County to secure emergency and permanent housing and related services.

KCHA provided direct staff support to the Good Food Bag pilot and brought skills and insights gained from their previous work as an agency partner with the federally funded Farm to Table program which was introduced at a nearby housing development.



Northwest Agriculture Business Center

www.agbizcenter.org

The Northwest Agriculture Business Center was instrumental in helping Educare secure pilot funding from a local foundation, enabling the agency to offer the Good Food Bags at over 60 percent below market price.

The NABC was instrumental in helping Educare secure pilot funding from a local foundation, enabling the agency to offer the Good Food Bags at a much lower cost (\$3 per bag) while offering wholesale purchasing and delivery through the Puget Sound Food Hub, an entity of NABC.

Educare Brief Takeaways



A generous time allotment for planning reduces pressure and frees time for the unexpected.

As a relatively large agency, more time than anticipated was required for several tasks, such as creating and procuring approval for a liability release form. Allow sufficient time to develop operating procedures, consult with finance staff, and promote the program with staff and clients to build awareness and buy-in before launch. Consult your local health department about core elements of release forms and agreements.



Twin program champions—parent and staff—yield best results.

While top management support is essential, it's equally vital that parents advocate the program. A parent volunteer forms natural connections with peers and can play other roles, such as helping with cooking demonstrations or tastings and advising on program operations through a user-oriented and, ideally, multicultural lens.



Harnessing kids' enthusiasm is value added.

While parental role modeling is influential, children sway parents too. Educare kids were excited to “unwrap” each Good Food Bag delivery and displayed contagious curiosity about unfamiliar produce. Good GFB energy carried over to the classroom where children learned about where food comes from—a concept reinforced by learning experiences, such as field trips to local farms.



Simple payment and bag distribution systems are best.

Good Food Bags were picked up when parents came for their kids. Exchange cash transactions were burdensome and required use of petty cash. Debit card use should be explored. Develop strategies to remind parents of pick-up days and times and engage staff and volunteers to distribute GFBs. Tastings or food demonstrations on distribution day generates interest.

Puget Sound Food Hub

Educare ordered fresh, seasonal produce from several local farms via the Puget Sound Food Hub—a secure, web-based platform set up by the Northwest Agriculture Business Center, a partner of the Farm to Table Program. At this online wholesale marketplace, eligible farmers can list their current inventory and customers can make weekly purchases for delivery—direct to their door.

The ordering system is efficient, easy to use, convenient, and reduces the carbon footprint—the excess use of resources, like heating oil and gas, which adverse effects on our planet.

Tiny Tots Good Food Bag Program

The Good Food Bag pilot at Tiny Tots began in April 2013. Partner agency Seattle Tilth had previously developed a GFB program. They brought this experience to the table. In addition, they are themselves growers of organic produce and are unique in that regard.

Tiny Tots GFB Program Partners



Tiny Tots

www.tinytotsdc.org

Tiny Tots is a nonprofit early childhood education center that offers infant care, preschool, and child care at a primary facility and at four satellite locations in South Seattle.

Established in 1969, Tiny Tots serves children and families from a wide variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds.

The agency secured a grant in 2011 to incorporate a Farm to Table program which led to a partnership with the 10-acre Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands, managed by Seattle Tilth—its partner in the GFB pilot.

Tiny Tots is located in one of America's most demographically diverse zip codes.



Seattle Tilth

www.seattletilth.org

Seattle Tilth—a nonprofit environmental membership organization established in 1978—is a leader in the movement to support equity in the food system and production of local, organically-grown food.

Seattle Tilth operates three urban farms and five gardens in King County, Washington and has expanded its reach over the years in both programs and geography.

As part of Tilth's educational, farming, gardening, and policy initiatives, the organization targets fun, hands-on programs for children.

Tiny Tots Brief Takeaways



Seeking synergy with existing administrative systems yields efficiencies.

Child care staff responsible for operations and finance introduced the program to parents in a timely manner—at enrollment. GFB charges were added to existing billing process for parents and via payroll deduction for staff, eliminating the need for prepayment and time-eating cash exchanges.



Top-level management commitment and involvement reaps benefits.

The agency manager was an enthusiastic advocate. A staff contest for weight loss and healthy eating, for example, inspired high employee participation. This, in turn, engaged parents and kids. Staff participation in a Good Food Bag program has positive, ripple effects.



A partner agency with food system expertise frees child care agency staff to focus on implementation and promotion.

The technical assistance partner was itself a grower of produce. They took care of selection and pre-bagging—activities that otherwise would be handled by the child care agency. If working with a partner organization, seek one that complements the special needs and capacities of your agency.



Regular check-ins with parents enables timely program adjustments.

Client feedback led, for example, to shifting the delivery day to a more convenient one for parents, increasing the likelihood of scratch cooking and using fresh produce at its peak. Creating an option for biweekly or weekly delivery of bags provided flexibility to clients.



Refugee and Immigrant Family Center (RIFC) Good Food Bag Program

Refugee and Immigrant Family Center GFB Program Partners



Refugee and Immigrant Family Center

[www.soundchildcare.org/
refugee-and-immigrant-family-center/](http://www.soundchildcare.org/refugee-and-immigrant-family-center/)

Part of Sound ChildCare Solutions—a nonprofit consortium of early care and education centers in the Seattle area—the Refugee and Immigrant Family Center (RIFC) is a bilingual Spanish-English preschool located in Southwest Seattle.

The RIFC provides high-quality preschool for children aged 3 to 5. Programming is culturally relevant with a significant number of multilingual staff.

The program emphasizes a holistic approach to child development, emphasizing early literacy and experiential learning.



Northwest Agriculture Business Center

www.agbizcenter.org

The NABC promotes the economic vitality of the agriculture industry in Northwest Washington. The agency provides technical assistance and resources to farmers to help them increase profits and efficiently supply their products to consumers, wholesalers, retailers, and others.

Founded in 2006, the NABC is located north of Seattle in one of the state's richest farming areas, the Skagit Valley.

NABC contributed to the Good Food Bag project by:

- Working with farmers and child care sites on the use of the online system to streamline ordering, payment, and produce delivery logistics.
- Educating farmers on unique aspects of a new market (child care sites)
- Providing on-site education to child care agency staff and volunteers.
- Setting up and maintaining the online food portal (Puget Sound Food Hub) for ordering produce—a core activity of the GFB Project.

RIFC Brief Takeaways



Ample buy-in and involvement of teachers and parent volunteers paves the way to high participation rates.

Teachers, on a rotating basis, actively invited and assisted parents with enrollment in the GFB Program. Continuous marketing and the commitment of all players to the GFB Program was reflected in high participation rates among staff and families.



Smaller agency size makes it easier to get things done.

While RIFC is part of a network of child care agencies, it is a relatively small, horizontally-structured organization with significant autonomy. Programming decisions, special fundraising efforts, and related activities to promote and maintain the GFB Program were expedited quickly with sufficient, but minimal levels of review.



Strategically plan for extra costs.

A robust agency meals budget supported, in part, the subsidized GFB price. Important activities to reinforce the GFB Program, such as transportation costs for farm field trips, were harder to fund. Itemize all activities and consider “fundability” for each when developing your program and funding strategy.



Universal Themes & Takeaways

While each child care agency that participated in the Good Food Bag Pilot is unique, with its own culture, history, and client mix, common experiences emerged. These enduring themes—along with observations from participants in the larger Farm to Table Partnership—are noted below.

Program planning and agency readiness

Tailor your program to your agency personality and local circumstances. To do this, first get a handle on the resources in your local community, region, and state such as the food policy environment and the availability of technical assistance. The decision to start a GFB program also hinges on agency readiness and capacity. See [Section III](#) to help guide this analysis.



If you decide to move forward, allow enough time to develop your program. Larger agencies, and those with many channels for management review, should allow three to four months at minimum. A shorter period may suffice for smaller groups.

Formal and informal partners

Child care agencies have full plates. And development of a Good Food Bag program takes time and experience. But it's doable with the right marriage of motivation and resources.

When you're conducting your agency and community assessment, search out an agency that works with farmers as a potential formal partner or advisor. Depending on resources, you may be able to align directly with a farm. Though not widely available throughout the county, a group in your area may offer business development and marketing support to farmers—similar to the Northwest Agriculture Business Center in Washington state. It is more likely that you will locate a group that develops regional food systems, works with [food hubs](#), or is familiar with marketing or cooperative development. Some universities and small nonprofit organizations operate farm to market advocacy programs.

As you start a GFB program, think about your clients' existing community connections. Use these to build program momentum or jointly seek funding. Geographic proximity might lead to natural partners if your agency borders a school, church, or housing community that serve a similar population. Word of mouth and informal alliances can be tapped for best results.

Pilot test and fine tune

Test your program for a season. Be prepared to make adjustments during this period. Devise some simple strategies to solicit feedback from parents, staff, agency partners, and other stakeholders and integrate this information into your operations. Surveys or informal check-ins work well.

Streamline and integrate

During the planning process and ongoing, look for natural connections between current operations, schedules, and activities at your agency and your anticipated GFB program. Try to integrate the GFB Program into existing business processes to streamline operations and create efficiencies, such as adding billing for the GFB to your invoicing system. Keeping this goal top of mind can help offset the



sometimes higher costs of procuring locally sourced fruits and vegetables and reduces the need to design new systems solely for your GFB program.

Champions and leaders—lateral, not top down

A key success factor is the identification of a staff leader to develop, manage, and promote your program. In most cases, the time required will exceed the capacity of a single person. Even if certain activities are delegated, one individual should be charged with overall responsibility.

A parent ambassador is equally important. Parent volunteers, particularly those interested in cooking or gardening, bring unique perspectives. They may identify barriers to participation and help shape your program. Their relationships with peers can build interest

too. Ideally, the parent volunteer(s) will match or be highly attuned to the language and cultural background of clients.

Fiscal and legal Issues



GFB Payment: Ideally, integrate GFB purchases into existing billing systems in your agency. A cash payment system can work, but the collection process is labor intensive. See these samples of Good Food Bag parent and staff [agreement forms](#). [Hyperlink to F2T URL Tiny Tots samples](#)



GFB Price and Subsidy: The “sweet spot” for pricing a GFB is between \$5 and \$6 dollars per bag for clients on limited incomes. Factors that affect pricing include the local cost of living, client interest, and whether produce is organic, nonorganic, or a combination of both. Procuring produce at wholesale prices and in season reduces costs.

The cost of each GFB, nonetheless, may exceed the amount that is affordable and acceptable to clients. Possible approaches to procuring funds to subsidize a GFB and related costs include:

- Grant support or seed money to pilot the program from a government agency or foundation.
- Annual or special fundraising events to create a dedicated GFB fund.
- Major individual donor (board member(s), local restaurant owners, or others with an interest in child health, sustainability, community development, or social and environmental justice.
- Joint grantseeking with a partner agency.

It is challenging to create sustainable funding sources so consider other mechanisms to control costs. For example, use of a sliding scale—with varying amounts for low and moderate-income customers, volunteers, and staff—is one vehicle that can moderate costs and approach the break-even point.

Confirm existing and prospective funder restrictions. During your planning process, review any contracts or memoranda of understanding with funders for limitations on accepting cash payments from clients or exceeding a break-even point for subsidized Good Food Bags. Restrictions might be overcome by developing a partnership with an outside agency, but you should be prepared should questions arise.



Liability: It's best to develop and require that each participant sign a liability release form at registration, enrollment, or other initial contact and prior to receipt of a GFB. Renew release forms each year. Following is one example:

SAMPLE

This document contains material that may or may not be suitable for or desired in your agency. If you choose to adapt its contents, submit it to the appropriate staff for review.

Good Food Bag Sign-up and Liability Release Form

☐

Yes, I would like to participate in the Good Food Bag Project

I agree to sign-up and participate in the Good Food Bag (GFB) Project. I understand that my participation is voluntary and if I do not pick up my GFB, it will be donated with no refund of my participation fee.

I understand that participation in the GFB Project carries with it certain inherent risks that cannot be eliminated regardless of the care taken to avoid injuries. The specific risks vary, but range from:

- Cooking food thoroughly
- Separating and avoiding cross-contamination of foods
- Chilling or refrigerating food appropriately
- Cleaning foodstuffs, instruments, and hands used in and for food preparation

I hold harmless agency name(s) and release liability from any and all claims from participation in the Good Food Bag Project.

Name (print) _____

Signature

X

Date _____

Marketing and outreach



Repeated and simple: Get the word out early and often, using a variety of channels that match the access points of agency clients.

Core elements of marketing, for print materials, social media, websites, and signage, are simplicity and liberal use of graphics. Graphics reinforce text and, if carefully selected, are understood by all. Once materials are developed, run them by a sample group of clients to be sure they are understood. Make necessary revisions.



Branding: Develop your “brand.” Use your existing agency logo and an additional graphic that represents the GFB program consistently in all materials. Eventually, people automatically make the connection.



Integration: Build synergy between the GFB and normal agency activities, such as curricula and group activities. For example, feature kids’ veggie art in posters, newsletters, or as a “rotating exhibit” on your agency website. If a particular fruit or vegetable is abundant in your region or has superior health benefits, add that item into the curriculum and hold group cooking events and tastings. Engage older siblings, too.

Word of mouth is powerful. If clients, staff, funders, agency partners, are excited about the program, they will share with others.

Personal stories and experiences resonate. Identify a few people—staff and parent volunteers—to be on the ready to record, write, and photograph reactions to the program on an impromptu basis and at formal events. You’ll develop a rich library for later use on your website, social media platforms, and grant proposals. Don’t forget to include the kids.



Health literacy and general literacy: Use a literacy lens in designing or buying print materials (flyers, signage, newsletters), presentations, and digital outreach. Apply the principles of health literacy, such as using plain language, words with few syllables, culturally appropriate references for context, and pictorial cues and graphics to reinforce text. Some graphics are almost universally understood. Limit the number of messages in your communications and steer clear of jargon. Do not assume clients are literate in their first language. Overall, simplicity is best—regardless of education level.





Cultural responsiveness: Cultural awareness factors into development of a Good Food Bag program due to wide variations in culturally-based food practices and beliefs. Race and ethnic background of clients may not exactly match enrollees, so consider your strategy in reaching out to clients and engaging a diverse, multicultural staff to support your efforts. Also, take into account any anticipated shifts in your client make up.

One approach, even on a tight budget, is to gather information on food likes and dislikes, beliefs about healthy weight, body image, role of food in traditional healing, fasting observance, cooking methods, as well as current use of fruits and vegetables and whether or not these play a central or supporting role.

For immigrants and refugees, long-held preferences may shift over time or be influenced by children's food choices. American-born clients, and those from different regions, usually have strong food traditions as well.

Written resources are abundant on cross cultural food traditions (e.g., [Ethnomed](#), produced by University of Washington Medicine/Harborview Medical Center). It may be faster, however, to first ask questions of clients. This information can hone marketing and outreach efforts. You may find, for example, that many clients do not follow written recipes or simply aren't comfortable reading them. A group cooking activity or education strategy might be ideal.

Certain fruits and vegetables are unfamiliar to parents, children, staff, and volunteers because of cultural traditions, personal or family preferences or experiences, cost and availability. While GFB recipients may appreciate the option to swap out certain items with others, you may wish to dig a little deeper to find out why a particular item is unpopular and address this when developing or tweaking your program.

Evaluation and focus groups

Embed funding for program evaluation in budgets. This will enhance opportunities for long-term funding and help your agency measure the effectiveness of your program and make course corrections. Think carefully about an evaluation strategy during the planning stage. In some communities, a human services coalition, United Way, or other group that has worked with similar programs may offer no or low-cost consulting.



Money is tight. Even when funds are limited, take advantage of easy, low-cost strategies to tailor the program and measure success. Conduct focus groups or other types of structured or semi-structured techniques to gather information from parents and other stakeholders before, during, and after your pilot period. Participants might include parents, teachers, and nutrition and meal coordinators. Track the number and source of formal and informal inquiries that pop up during your pilot.

Ask potential parent participants about their behaviors with respect to days that they cook and have the most time to cook, where they shop, who cooks in the family, purchasing habits, and acceptable GFB costs. Use a [pictorial fruit and vegetable survey](#) to gauge interest, familiarity, and use of specific fruits and vegetables. [Hyperlink to F2T site; KCHA doc.](#)

Get answers via visual surveys. While not scientific, a [dot survey](#) can yield preliminary information to help develop and plan a GFB program. Originally designed for [use in farmers markets](#), dot surveys are a simple visual technique that can be adapted to a child care setting. Invite parents to rate, for example, their use and interest in various fruits and vegetables by affixing stick-on colored “dots” on poster-sized easels. This technique can be added to a planned event or gathering of families. Another benefit: It’s fun and gets people talking to one another.

Kids on deck!

Build on the natural enthusiasm of children. Strong parental influence on food choices and behavior of kids is expected. A surprising experience at all child care sites, however, was the interest among the children in the Good Food Bags. Many were excited when they arrived and begged to “unwrap” them. They were open to tasting new and often unfamiliar vegetables. And they savored the samples.

Harness this enthusiasm to influence parents. For example, a child might persuade a parent to cook a vegetable that is unfamiliar, disliked, or not a “culturally comfortable” food.

Child care setting advantages

Child care and early learning environments offer natural opportunities to weave elements of a Good Food Bag program into daily activities. Examples include a focus on gardening for science projects, field trips to farms or farmers markets followed by a vegetable “artwork” activity, family potlucks at the school using the produce of the week, and selecting an item from the week’s GFB as a snack and in reading exercises.

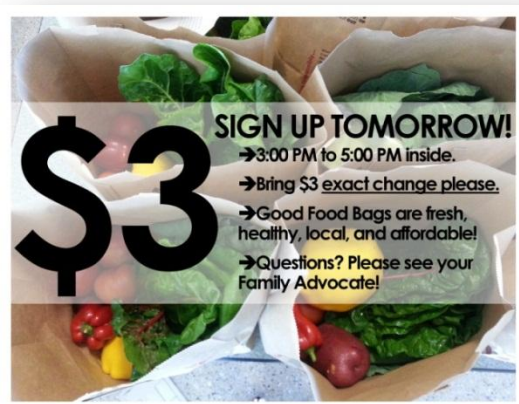
Good Food Bags contents & distribution



Contents: Seasonal availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in your area will dictate what is offered in a GFB. But certain combinations can maximize the use and benefit of the bag. One approach is to use a “core” food, complemented by the other items. Add a recipe that uses all items in the bag.



Distribution day, time of month, and time: Regularly ask clients about their routine. Work or training schedules



and family commitments might suggest the best day to receive the GFB. If possible, try to match this to a 36-hour period in which the farmer (or other produce provider) delivers produce to your agency. Select a window of time that matches when parents are on site and can pick up their bags.

Depending on how long parents are at your agency on distribution day, conduct a cooking demonstration or tasting, or both. Incorporate demos and tastings into other agency activities or plan a special event during the launch of the GFB and at holiday gatherings.

Set up a reminder system for distribution day. Signage placed in a highly visible location is one strategy. Whatever materials are used, be sure to incorporate logos or other graphics that you select for your GFB Program. Verbal reminders by staff are another avenue to make the GFB pick-up day a habit.

If bags are distributed on an every other week schedule, consider selecting weeks that are close to the time that families enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are exhausting their monthly benefit. This may also create an incentive to use the produce and practice cooking with unfamiliar food. The timing of SNAP benefit renewal varies from state to state, and within states, so review the [SNAP Monthly Benefit Issuance Schedule](#).



Companion materials: In addition to recipes that complement the GFB, include a simple flyer or brochure on **suggested sanitation practices** that explains safe use of fruits and vegetables. It is important for public health and liability reasons to educate clients and minimize risk of foodborne illness.



Produce irregulars and “seconds”: Don’t use oddly shaped produce. Even if perfectly good, customers tend to respond negatively, and may even feel they are “second best.” If you end up with seconds, find another good use, such as juicing carrots, blending a smoothie, or donating to a nearby food bank or meal program.



Ordering: Develop an ordering process that closely matches the number of GFBs ordered and number of paid customers. Best estimates can be developed prior to ordering.



Refrigeration: Whether or not your agency needs to refrigerate produce between delivery and client pick up time will vary depending on the local climate and the specific items involved. Usually it is not necessary if delivery and distribution times are close. And some items lose their flavor in cold storage, such as tomatoes, onions, lemons, and limes. When in doubt, consult with the food provider, any partner agency, or your local health department.



“Off-season” and “down-time” activities: In many parts of the country, fresh fruits and vegetables are available only during peak periods. And your agency may also experience a



peak season in terms of workload. Harness these rare windows to take care of activities that you are unable to fully address during your busiest periods. Here are a few ideas:

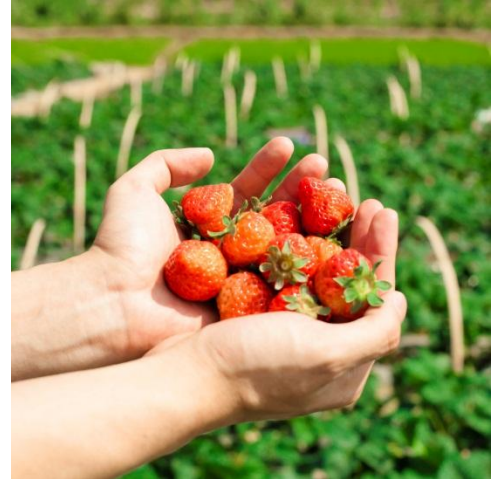
- Conduct additional focus groups to get feedback from staff, parents, volunteers, and kids.
- Explore new partnerships or alliances.
- Prepare a simple written guide to document your GFB procedures and operations.
- Design a parent volunteer and staff-oriented GFB train the trainer program so you're not in a pickle when absences or staff changes occur.
- Research funding sources and explore dedicated funds from a major donor, such as someone who supports your agency and might fund a GFB subsidy fund, or part-time position.
- Incorporate GFB topics into curricula (drawing fruits and vegetables) and plan activities to follow up a field trip.
- Schedule events and staff meetings to market your program and build community.
- Redo recipes and other companion materials.
- Modify promotional materials to reflect culturally meaningful terms and concepts.
- Establish small gardens on site.
- Stage a contest to "healthify" recipes to increase use of fruits and vegetables, using favorite family recipes. Then ask a nutritionist or dietitian to "revise the recipe. Compile into a cookbook or post monthly on your agency website.
- Organize a family night at a convenient time for parents and kids. Invite a local farmer and partner agency. Set up a "fake" fruit stand, do a cooking demonstration, and tastings. Organize a finger painting or other art contest and provide some GFBs.



Section III

Harvest: Starting a Good Food Bag Program

Many factors go into creating a Good Food Bag (GFB) program in your own agency and in your town. And every community and agency is unique. The best programs are tailored and flexible, while integrating core elements of the most successful programs.



How to Start a Good Food Bag Program in Your Community

This section contains hands-on suggestions to help guide your process, beginning with an overview of the major steps involved. These activities don't necessarily flow in a linear sequence. They are guideposts to make sure you're covering the bases.



Components of a Good Food Bag Program

The colors used for the activities listed below are repeated in the relevant text in this section.



Assess your agency and community to determine GFB feasibility

Conduct an analysis of your agency and your community. This process includes looking at factors within and outside your agency that could influence the feasibility and desirability of starting a GFB program. Analyzing these factors will help guide you in developing your program. You may wish to review the agency **and community assessment form** as a starting point. The questions on the form are “thought provokers” to help determine your readiness and capacity to develop a GFB program. You may wish to consult with colleagues in other agencies, public and private, as you consider your options. **Form on pg. 35**

The text below builds on selected questions in the agency and community assessment form.

An important step is to conduct research to see if the necessary resources and support are present in your community—from the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables from farms or other outlets to the policy culture in early education, nutrition, environmental health, land use, and agriculture at the state and local levels. For instance, one sign of a positive policy climate is whether or not your city incorporates *food systems planning* into their comprehensive plans. Examples of cities that do this include Portland, Oregon; Madison, Wisconsin; and Chicago, Illinois.

Has someone in your community set up a GFB-type program? Nonprofit groups and government agencies, such as your local and state health departments and other units of government responsible for early childhood education, child nutrition, human services, and community gardening, may be involved with or interested in this type of program.

Has your state, county, or city received a federal grant from the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) or other agency that is taking aim at increasing access to healthy foods or reducing obesity? If so, potential partners, technical assistance, or other valuable support might be available.



Food systems vocabulary

A starting place in thinking about developing a Good Food Bag program is to get a handle on frequently used terms and concepts related to food systems. This will come in handy as you educate yourself and describe your program to others—from child care agency staff to potential funders.

Food hub

The U.S. Department of Agriculture uses this working definition of a food hub. “A regional food hub is a business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.” In some communities, several farmers deliver their produce directly to a food hub.

Locally-sourced foods

A central part of a Good Food Bag program is the use of locally sourced foods. These are foods that are produced within 100 miles of your community or less. While foods imported from distant places are often cheaper because of “economies of scale” (large quantities = lower unit price), they are not as fresh and nutritious as locally-produced foods. And they do not support the local economy.

Seasonality

The months of the year for growing fruits and vegetables varies across the country. The use of produce that is in season and grown locally translates to better prices, eating food at its nutritional and flavor peak, and supports the local and regional economy.

Sustainability

Policies and behaviors that reduce the rate of depletion of environmental, economic, and social resources.



Connect with a farm or other produce source, or technical assistance partner

The number and type of farms vary from state to state. Contact your state department of agriculture for this information. Another resource is the extension service of any land-grant college or university in your state.

Many farms bring fresh produce closer to cities via farmers markets. Farmers markets allow consumers access to locally grown, farm fresh produce and enable farmers to develop a relationship with customers. Over 8,100 farmers markets were listed in the [2013 USDA National Farmers Market Directory](#).

Also, [recent research](#) on the use of farmers markets in rural areas, where obesity rates are often higher than in urban communities, suggests that farmers markets may help increase produce consumption among low-income families, especially if barriers like transportation and hours of operation are overcome.

Your state department of agriculture should be able to point you to a nonprofit or academic institution that focuses on farm-related marketing. The extension service of any land-grant college or university in your state is another rich source of information and may be familiar with groups that provide business development, cooperative development, and other technical assistance and education services to farmers.

The [Northwest Agriculture Business Center](#) in Western Washington is one of a handful of organizations in the country that assists farmers in business development and moving products to market through innovative strategies, including “matchmaking” with child care agencies and other institutions. Similar groups, however, are located in other states. Contact one of the following groups if you live in or near New York, Colorado, and Alabama.

- [Glynwood Center](#) in Cold Spring, New York (the Hudson Valley)
- [Revision International](#) in Denver, Colorado
- [Federation of Southern Cooperatives Land Assistance Fund–Rural Training and Research Center](#) in Epes, Alabama.

A list of nearby farmer-owned cooperatives and farmers markets is available at [LocalHarvest.org](#) by simply entering your zip code. A directory of food hubs is available at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) [Know Your Farmer Know Your Food Compass website](#).

Another option is to hook up with a nearby grocery store or market that has wholesale connections. Share your program idea and ask about the possibility of purchasing produce at wholesale prices and delivering produce.



Funding a Good Food Bag program on a tight budget

The results of your agency and community analysis may point to best prospects for funding your program overall, and subsidizing the bag in particular. If you're working

with a partner agency, an opportunity may exist to jointly apply for funding from a local government agency or foundation. Your partner agency may already know the funding landscape.

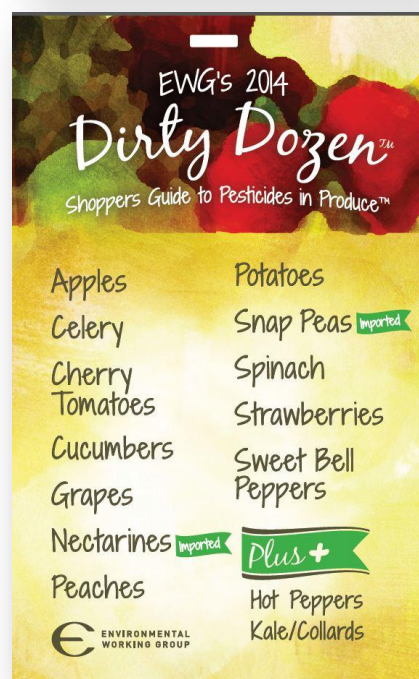
Think long term. Seed grants for a pilot program may be available, but what then? To sustain your subsidy and related costs, consider whether a board member or supportive individual(s) in your network might contribute to a dedicated GFB subsidy fund. Hold a special event, making available an educational handout and a mini-farmers market stall with tastings. Your program may pay for itself over time through a combination of bulk buying discounts and volunteer labor.

Tailor fundraising requests, informal and formal, to the interests of the individual or institutional donor, taking into account the broader benefits of a GFB program. For example, in addition to supporting parents and children, a GFB program benefits farmers—especially immigrant and refugee producers—and your community.

Organic vs nonorganic produce

The cost of organic produce may be higher than other produce, but this may vary depending on seasonality and the volume of producers in your area. Taking a larger view, the overall family budget for food might make a GFB affordable if other high-cost foods are reduced or eliminated, such as prepared foods.

And there are health costs to consider. Pesticide exposure is a concern, especially in small children. According to the Environmental <http://www.ewg.org> Working Group, <http://www.ewg.org>/however, the nutritional value of fruits and vegetables outweighs the risk of



When unable to "go 100% organic," choose items with the least amount of pesticide residues. Copyright © Environmental Working Group, www.ewg.org. Reprinted with permission.

pesticide exposure—even if the produce is *not* organically grown.

So one way to minimize costs and maximize health is to find a middle ground by mixing it up, organic and nonorganic. Avoid produce with the highest levels of pesticide contamination, or the “Dirty Dozen,” and choose from among the “Clean 15” instead.

Don’t rule out a farm just because their produce is not organic. The cost of obtaining organic certification is out of reach for some small scale farms, but they may still use environmentally sustainable production methods. By working directly with a farm you gain an opportunity to speak directly with the farmer and learn first-hand about their production methods. And this personal contact may later translate into unique educational opportunities for your agency.



Estimate produce amounts and ordering

If you have a technical assistance partner, work with them to learn how to prepare estimates. An essential component of Good Food Bag (and Farm to Table) programs is the capacity to purchase in bulk at lower-cost, wholesale prices. Several factors can affect your estimates such as whether or not you are gearing the contents of your bag around a specific recipe, the number of meals anticipated, and seasonal produce availability.

The main steps are as follows:

1. Determine the number of bags you need for the week.
2. Check [here](#) for guidance on amounts needed based on desired serving and family size.



Marketing & outreach

Develop a plan to get the word out—early and often—about your GFB program through multiple channels. A first priority is to engage staff and parent champions to support the effort. The formula that works best for your agency will depend on pre-existing programs centered on nutrition, agency culture, the hours when parents are present, the racial and ethnic make-up of families, and the frequency of regularly scheduled group-oriented activities.

See the [universal takeaways](#) information in section II for more ideas.

In the meantime, you can anticipate and prepare for a number of reasonable questions as well as myths and misconceptions about GFB programs from parents, staff, board members, and potential funders. Get a jump on these by developing responses in a question and answer format (Q & A). This preparation is a useful internal process, and shows you’ve done your homework.

Your written Q & As should address typical questions to help guide conversations and can be added to print materials for specific audiences. Consider embedding them in staff training, parent education, marketing, grant proposals, and more.

Following are a couple questions that might come your way:

Q. Parent

Why should I buy a GFB when a big warehouse store is just down the street—and cheaper?

A. Our GFB provides family-sized quantities of organic, chemical-free produce. It's just-picked fresh, so it's more nutritious. And it's convenient because you can get it when you pick up your kids.

Local produce in season can be close in price to the same produce at a grocery store. At times the contents of the GFB may be more expensive than what you can get at some stores, so we offer the bag at a reduced price.

And we're including some recipes written just for our parents. We're planning group cooking events and field trips for the kids too.

Also, we can all advocate that our warehouse stores stock more produce from local sources. This way we can combine our selections to reduce overall costs.

Q. Potential Funder

Our foundation makes early childhood education and nutrition and wellness a priority, but broader initiatives have more impact than a GFB program.

A. That's a good point. A GFB program, though, is bigger than you might think. It's a great way to improve the health of the families we serve and increase their food security while building community and sustaining our local economy. By purchasing produce locally, we support our regional farmers, many of whom are refugee and immigrant families. So their success helps all of us.

It's an investment in our environment too. By buying locally we reduce transportation requirements and emissions associated with gasoline use.

Tailor fundraising requests, informal and formal, to the interests of the individual or institutional donor, taking into account the broader benefits of a GFB program. For example, in addition to supporting parents, and children, a GFB program benefits farmers—especially immigrant and refugee producers—and your community.

Evaluate & monitor

Monitor, evaluate, and refine your program

Once your program is rolling, it's important to keep checking in with parents (and staff) who have been receiving a GFB to see what's working and what's not. Tasks to help gauge how things are going include:

- Monitor enrollment numbers on a monthly basis. Follow up with any parents who drop out to determine their reasons and evaluate if a program tweak is indicated. If you use a technical assistance partner, they might be able to assume some responsibility for this activity.
- Query any staff participants, at regular staff meetings, about their impressions of the program and solicit practical enhancements.
- To gauge client perspectives, informally query families and staff about their knowledge, interest, and use of fresh fruits and vegetables and the amount they would pay for a Good Food Bag. Some of the same questions might be asked before, during, and at the end of the school year. *Add hyperlink link should be added here to the F2T website, Toolkit Resources*

Good Food Bag Survey

Please fill this out and return it when you pick up your next GFB.

1. How would you rate the items you received in the Good Food Bag?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Excellent. Good. Fair. Poor.

2. Did you use all the items in your last Good Food Bag?

☐ ☐
 Yes. No.

3. Do you feel like the Good Food Bag is worth the price?

☐ ☐ ☐
 Yes. Kind of. No.

4. Is there anything you would like to get in the next Good Food Bag?

5. Is there anything you do not want to get in the next Good Food Bag?

GOOD FOOD BAG

1. How would you rate the items you received in the Good Food Bag?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 Excellent. Good. Fair. Poor.

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☐ ☐ ☐
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5. Is there anything you do not want to get in the next Good Food Bag?

Suggested Survey Questions for Good Food Bag Parent & Staff Participants

- Is the amount of produce you receive in each GFB too much, just the right amount, or too little?
- What items do you want to see more of?
- What items do you want to see less of?
- Are you happy with the contents of each bag?
- How would you rate the quality of produce in each GFB: totally satisfied, neutral, poor?
- How many times did you use the recipes included in your GFB: never, sometimes, very often?
- Did you find the information about the produce helpful: never, sometimes, most of the time?
- What do you suggest we do to expand the program?
- How did you find out about the program? Child care agency staff? Another participant? Flyer or sign? Other?
- What can we do to improve the program for you and your family?

Agency & Community Assessment

Consider the following questions to determine your agency readiness for a Good Food Bag program. You may also wish to consult with colleagues in other agencies, public and private.

?	Questions
Local & Regional Produce Availability	
Are there any farms that grow fruits and vegetables (organic or nonorganic) within a 100-mile radius?	
If so, do these farms deliver produce in your community?	
Are there any farmers markets or stalls in your area?	
If so, do they accept WIC vouchers or SNAP (food stamps)?	
Are there other places to purchase produce that is grown in your region?	
Fruit & Vegetable Consumption & Obesity Patterns	
Do you know the level of fruit & vegetable consumption in your community? Your state? Your client community?	
If so, how does it compare to other states?	
Are you aware of the rates of overweight and obesity in your community; your state?	
What are the rates of overweight and obesity in children aged 2 to 5 in your area?	
What are the rates of overweight and obesity in children of color aged 2 to 5 in your area? In your agency? ¹	
Do you know the trends for child and adolescent overweight and obesity in your city and state?	
What is the incidence of type 2 diabetes in children in your community?	
Local, Regional, & State Food & Nutrition Policy & Programs	
Do you know the level of commitment to agriculture, sustainable production, and healthy eating at the local and state government levels?	
Is there a farm-to-school program in your state?	
Are childhood nutrition and obesity prevention initiatives supported by your local health department or other units of local government?	
Is there a food policy council in your state?	
Are you familiar with early learning programs available or sponsored by city and state government agencies?	
Funding and Technical Assistance Resources	
Are nutrition and wellness programs receiving foundation or federal funding in your community? Is there a focus on children? What ages?	
Do you know if there are agencies that support or work with small farmers in your area to expand market share?	
Is there a philanthropy or human services coalition in your city?	
Does your local United Way offer technical assistance to community-based organizations in your city?	
What are the main sources of funding for your agency and do you have a fundraising plan?	

Trends and Opportunities

Due to changes in federal law, more flexible options are available for use of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) cards held by those enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, previously food stamps). For example, these can now be used at approved [farmer's markets](#). Locally, one of the child care agencies that participated in the GFB pilot is testing the use of an EBT on site.

And since [June 2014](#), the amount available for purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables by low-income women enrolled in the federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program has increased by 30 percent.

We hope that similar momentum and excitement about increasing food access, supporting vulnerable children and families, and all the other benefits of a Good Food Bag program will take hold in other communities.

Have you developed a Good Food Bag program at your child care agency?
If so, we would love to hear about it! Please contact Natalie Thomson, City of Seattle Human Services Department, Youth and Family Empowerment Division.

206-684-0840

Natalie.Thomson@seattle.gov

Appendices

Appendix A: **References & Resources**

Appendix B: **Research and Evaluation Note**

Appendix C: **Details on the Good Food Bag Pilots**

Appendix A: References and Resources

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Appendix B: Research and Evaluation Note

The Toolkit blends the collective wisdom of several participants in the Farm to Table Partnership in Seattle and King County, Washington. While funding dollars for a formal assessment of the Good Food Bag Pilot were not available, we were able to draw upon prior experience with the larger F2T Program dating back to 2010—and gather feedback from participants in the GFB Pilot in an organized fashion.

In-person interviews were conducted with those overseeing the program at the City of Seattle, with technical assistance agency partners, and with staff from the three child care agencies who implemented a GFB program.

These were conducted between February and September 2014, using one set of questions for planners and managers, and a second set for those implementing the program on the ground. Several core questions were asked of each agency, but the order and flow of the questions was flexible and open ended by design. The questions served as a roadmap to guide the conversation and gather reactions and recommendations. These, in turn, were reviewed to capture any common themes and differences among the agencies.

One of the technical assistance partner agencies (Seattle Tilth) conducted two phone surveys to gather ideas from parents and child care agency staff participants about the Good Food Bag Program. While the reactions were positive, only a small number of English speaking parents were reached. One of the child care agencies also interviewed parent participants. Both agencies adjusted elements of their program based on these responses.

Some quantitative data was collected on parent and staff participation at each of the child care agency sites.

Appendix C: Details on the Good Food Bag Pilots

A Snapshot of the 2013 Seattle Good Food Bag Pilot Project

Roots: Inspired by [Canadian programs](#), tailored to local circumstances

Incremental: Built upon existing local programs and infrastructure

Purposes: Connect low-income families and children with affordable fresh produce to reduce health disparities and obesity risk and increase access to healthy food, enhance the local economy, cement new partnerships, and build community

Duration: Up to 12 months

Approach: Create “natural hubs” to meet customers where they gather: three early learning–licensed child care agencies serving high-need clients in demographically diverse locations

Model: Produce ordered online with direct delivery from local farms, pre-bagged by staff or volunteers for clients

Bag price: \$3–\$8

Age: Kids aged 3–5 and their families

Early learning–child care agencies:

- [Seattle Educare](#)
- [Tiny Tots Development Center](#)
- [Refugee and Immigrant Family Center](#)

Technical assistance partner agencies:

- [King County Housing Authority](#)
- [Seattle Tilth](#)
- [Northwest Agriculture and Business Center](#)

Oversight & technical assistance organizations:

- [City of Seattle Human Services Department](#)
- [Seattle Children’s Hospital](#)
- [Public Health–Seattle & King County](#)

[Farm to Table Program Brochure](#)

Educare GFB Program Details

Program Elements	Lessons Learned
<p>Participation</p> <p>Total # families: 68 Staff: 6 Parents: 61 Other: 1</p>	
<p>Planning, management, legal issues</p> <p>The pilot was developed and implemented by a manager and meals program coordinator, with additional help from a nutrition aide and parent volunteer.</p> <p>Significant support was provided by a technical assistance partner agency.</p>	<p>Schedule and timing</p> <p>Build in generous start-up and planning time, and then add a few weeks to your best guess. Unanticipated issues arise and some tasks inevitably take longer than expected. For example, it was necessary to develop and obtain approval for a new liability release form for parents participating in the GFB Program. For this and other reasons, the start date was delayed.</p> <p>Consider the peak season for fruit and vegetable availability when setting your launch date.</p> <p>Assign administrative and fiscal lead(s)</p> <p>Assign an individual to shepherd the program and supervise volunteers since one person can't absorb all tasks to their workload, but delegate some duties to other staff and committed parent volunteers.</p> <p>Substantial time commitments are needed up front and only slightly reduced ongoing.</p>
<p>Marketing & outreach</p> <p>The GFB program was introduced at a regular staff meeting and a monthly event for parents and children. Eye-catching flyers were produced.</p> <p>Food demonstrations and tastings were held to generate interest in the "produce of the week," and to suggest creative ways to use the produce at distribution time.</p>	<p>Identify two champions—staff and parent</p> <p>In addition to selecting a staff leader for the program, engage a parent volunteer. Provide a free GFB or other acknowledgement.</p> <p>Parent champions can inspire enthusiasm among other families through formal and informal channels. Also, parents might see barriers or suggest program changes not recognized by staff. Consider potential volunteers with an interest in cooking or gardening.</p> <p>Schedule a launch and get the word out early and often to build momentum</p> <p>Develop a marketing and outreach plan, with a dedicated event or special time to launch the program. Embed mention of the GFP program to existing and planned activities and events.</p> <p>Use consistent messaging and repetition to generate and sustain interest among staff, parents, caregivers, and children through flyers, newsletters, staff meetings, posters, signage, and other vehicles.</p> <p>Organize tastings or cooking demonstrations</p> <p>Holding a tasting at the same time as GFB bag distribution spurs interest, serves as a visual cue of pick up day, and is an opportunity to talk about produce and ways to prepare it.</p>

Add fun activities with the kids

Field trips, such as a pumpkin farm visit followed by carving or preparing pumpkins to eat, are well received by kids.

Seek synergy

Weave content about nutrition, fruits, and vegetables into curricula. Match snacks with one of the items in the GFB each week.

Involve potential partners to build customer base

Nearby community gardens, a school, and a mixed income housing development served families similar to the agency clients and with whom interaction occurred.

Flexibility to take advantage of natural connections across like communities— combined with a sliding fee scale—can generate interest. But this flexibility does not always align with funder priorities. Think about this when seeking funding and speaking with potential donors.

Produce orders

Produce was ordered online at the [Puget Sound Food Hub](#) website, set up by the Northwest Agriculture Business Center (a technical assistance partner) for use by farmers and wholesale customers.

Pre-test online ordering systems

Unanticipated snags or problems may be caught through a practice session before the official program begins. Ensure that payment methods available for any web-based ordering processes match agency needs and capacities, such as purchase orders and credit card access.

Excess orders

These were provided to staff or donated to a nearby food bank.

Some clients forgot they had prepaid for a GFB, leading to some leftover bags.

Establish a system to match number of bags ordered and purchased

If possible, consult with others who have managed a similar program or brainstorm logical contact points, signage, or other messaging to align orders and pick ups.

Good Food Bag Pricing

Subsidized Price: \$3/bag. Actual cost \$8-10/bag. A foundation grant also covered costs of cooking demonstrations & tastings.

Set a suitable price point and GFB subsidy

Focus groups can help determine a bag price that clients are able and willing to pay. Evaluate existing and potential funding sources if a subsidy for the GFB is needed initially and on an ongoing basis.

Client willingness to purchase bags is not limited to ability to pay. Perception of the overall value of the GFB is also a factor, so education and program promotion factor in to the calculation.

Good Food Bag Contents

Minimize use of produce readily available in bulk

Consider avoiding produce that is readily available in bulk at low prices, such as potatoes and spinach.

Consider cultural backgrounds and preferences

Some produce may not be familiar to parents and even meal planners. Seize the opportunity to create novel ways of preparing the item via special recipes and tastings.

Engage others with expertise in cooking with any unfamiliar produce

Preparation & Contents

Companion materials inserted in the GFBs included information on one or more of the items in the bag, instructions on safe food preparation, and recipes.

Selections were based on seasonal availability, with less consideration to holidays and cultural preferences. When possible, bilingual English-Spanish materials were included in the GFB.

A nutrition aide filled the bags one hour before the pick-up time frame for parents.

Bag type

Paper, purchased in bulk from a local chain store

Signing up parents & collecting payment

The GFB purchasing system was a cash transaction handled by a staff person from the partner agency. Parents were asked to bring the exact amount required; petty cash was used to make change.

Fiscal Management

Consistency

Identify the best day and time to register for the GFB ... and stick with it.

Prepaying preferred

Cash issue—consider ability to accept cash, funder restrictions, etc.

Exact change essential. Bring petty cash, Consider ways to accept a debit card and/or EBT.

Pick-up reminder

Develop to remind prepaid customers to pick up their GFB.

Evaluation & monitoring

Purchasing and pricing information was collected but, no formal user evaluation system was developed.

Anecdotal feedback was obtained informally from parents, staff, and the technical assistance partner agency.

Positive client response

Clients who enrolled in the program were small in number, but enthusiastic.

Multiple actions are needed to generate interest.

Focus groups conducted prior to the pilot found that the \$5-6 range for the GFB was acceptable.

GFB distribution

GFB distribution took place during a three-hour window at the end of the day on a weekly basis.

Create opportunities and be flexible to engage parents

The window for pick-up of the GFB was tight. This limited the opportunity to embed education and engage parents anxious to pick up their kids and head home.

Because of this constraint, food demonstrations were replaced with tastings.

Continually look for other opportunities to educate

Tiny Tots GFB Program Details

Program Elements	Lessons Learned
<p>Program Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was designed to be flexible and adaptable to different types of projects and organizations. • The program was designed to be scalable and able to handle a large number of projects and organizations. • The program was designed to be user-friendly and easy to use for project managers and other stakeholders. 	<p>Program Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was designed to be flexible and adaptable to different types of projects and organizations. • The program was designed to be scalable and able to handle a large number of projects and organizations. • The program was designed to be user-friendly and easy to use for project managers and other stakeholders.
<p>Program Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was implemented in a phased manner, starting with a pilot project and then rolling out to other projects and organizations. • The program was implemented with a focus on training and support for project managers and other stakeholders. • The program was implemented with a focus on monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the program was meeting its goals and objectives. 	<p>Program Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was implemented in a phased manner, starting with a pilot project and then rolling out to other projects and organizations. • The program was implemented with a focus on training and support for project managers and other stakeholders. • The program was implemented with a focus on monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the program was meeting its goals and objectives.
<p>Program Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was evaluated using a variety of methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups. • The program was evaluated to determine its impact on project managers and other stakeholders. • The program was evaluated to determine its effectiveness in achieving its goals and objectives. 	<p>Program Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was evaluated using a variety of methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups. • The program was evaluated to determine its impact on project managers and other stakeholders. • The program was evaluated to determine its effectiveness in achieving its goals and objectives.

Program Elements	Lessons Learned
<p>Program Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was designed to be flexible and adaptable to different types of projects and organizations. • The program was designed to be scalable and able to handle a large number of projects and organizations. • The program was designed to be user-friendly and easy to use for project managers and other stakeholders. 	<p>Program Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was designed to be flexible and adaptable to different types of projects and organizations. • The program was designed to be scalable and able to handle a large number of projects and organizations. • The program was designed to be user-friendly and easy to use for project managers and other stakeholders.
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<p>Program Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was evaluated using a variety of methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups. • The program was evaluated to determine its impact on project managers and other stakeholders. • The program was evaluated to determine its effectiveness in achieving its goals and objectives. 	<p>Program Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program was evaluated using a variety of methods, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups. • The program was evaluated to determine its impact on project managers and other stakeholders. • The program was evaluated to determine its effectiveness in achieving its goals and objectives.

Participation

Total # families: 50 Staff: 55%
Parents: 30% Other: 15% (church members, neighbors)

Planning, management, legal issues	Focus on streamlining
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project planning - Management - Legal issues 	

<p>All persons receiving a GFB (both staff and clients) were required to sign an enrollment-member agreement form, which asked for basic demographic information, desired number of bags, and delivery frequency.</p>	<p>Consider ways to integrate a GFB program into existing operations. Creating system efficiencies at all levels is central to offsetting the relatively high cost of procuring locally-sourced produce.</p>
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Focus on streamlining

Consider ways to integrate a GFB program into existing operations. Creating system efficiencies at all levels is central to offsetting the relatively high cost of procuring locally-sourced produce.

Identify two program champions—staff *and* parent

In addition to identifying a staff leader for the program, engage a parent volunteer.

Parent champions can inspire enthusiasm and interest through formal and informal channels. Also, parents might become aware of barriers or suggest program tweaks to better match needs and improve operations.

Marketing & outreach	Refine the program model before conducting outreach
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A special launch event was held at the main agency site to talk up the GFB & educate potential participants and staff.

Later, agency staff introduced the program during the child care enrollment process (and throughout the year for those not enrolling in fall).	Reach out to parents and staff repeatedly at events and other touch points via print materials, posters, electronic newsletters, social media, group and one-on-one
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The agency “champion” was a manager with wide-ranging responsibilities including fiscal management.

Refine the program model before conducting outreach

Conduct intense marketing and assume liberal time commitment

Reach out to parents and staff repeatedly at events and other touch points via print materials, posters, electronic newsletters, social media, group and one-on-one conversations, and other vehicles to get the word out about the program and its benefits.

Program promotion is the single most time consuming, yet essential, activity.

Produce orders	Automate billing to avoid more GFB orders than customers
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The partner agency—growers of organic produce—provided vegetables from their own gardens during the peak growing season.

They also ordered produce online from other sources locally and from a nearby state as needed.	“buy in” and reduced the need to continuously remind customers of impending GFB deliveries.
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Automate billing to avoid more GFB orders than customers

The number of bags ordered each week closely matched the number of parents receiving them. The combination of an automated billing system and talking about the GFB program during preschool enrollment may have increased “buy in” and reduced the need to continuously remind customers of impending GFB deliveries.

Good Food Bag pricing	Subsidize the GFB
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Subsidized Price: \$5.00. Actual cost ranged from \$7–\$12 per bag, varying by season.

Subsidize the GFB

Other than ongoing grants, a reliable way to provide a subsidized and affordable GFB is uncertain.

Potential exists to reach a break-even point by mixing low-to-moderate income customers, a sliding scale, and a well-managed volunteer program.

Good Food Bag contents & preparation

Four items were provided in each GFB, usually 4 pieces of fruit, a bunch of vegetables, a bunch of greens, and a bunch of herbs or an onion.

The number of bags packed per week ranged from 20–60. Labor time was 2 hours if done by one individual and about 45 minutes with volunteers.

English only companion materials included:

- A half-sheet flyer highlighting nutrition information and cooking tips for one produce item
- One to two recipes.

Refrigeration & other cold storage available at partner agency. BUT planning important due to timing, capacity issues, number of orders of all types, etc.

Minimize use of produce readily available in bulk at low cost, conserving and allocating funds more efficiently.

Be aware of cultural and cross-cultural preferences

Onions were identified as a core item as all recipients used them in cooking, regardless of background.

Create a mechanism to address personal tastes

Customizing each bag to client preferences is labor and time intensive. Consider easy ways to meet individual tastes like a “swap box” where parents trade an unwanted or disliked produce item(s) for another.

Overall, especially popular items were vegetable-based smoothies and kale chips

Add companion materials

English-language materials were understood by clients of diverse backgrounds due to generous use of graphics and a limited number of messages. Write (and edit) simple recipes, using basic words.

Bag type

Paper bags with handles, along with a smaller plastic bag for items that requiring a humid environment.

Later, a one-time use, compostable bag was introduced.

Select eco-friendly bags if possible

Strive to use biodegradable bags. While not all are reusable, they are environmentally friendly and require no client reminders to return them.

Sign up & payment collection

The GFB ordering and payment arrangements were built into the child care enrollment process and processed by agency staff at the beginning of the year; the partner agency signed up parents enrolling later in the year in concert with agency staff.

Customers could opt for weekly or biweekly (every other week) bags.

Streamline ordering and billing systems

For maximum efficiency, embed payment collection for the GFB into existing billing systems and include the opportunity to opt out at any time.

This method eliminates the need to collect payment on bag distribution days and handle cash. Enrollment is a natural opportunity to inform parents about the GFB Program.

Evaluation & monitoring

In depth phone surveys of a small sampling of parents were conducted. While challenging to reach participants, respondents were positive about the program overall.

Some patterns emerged about produce preferences. For example, fruit was very well received, but herbs were not used much.

Seek customer feedback often

Phone surveys are labor intensive. They can, however, yield helpful information that agency leaders can use to adjust operations and outreach strategies.

Identify simple ways to gather client reactions, taking language and natural “encounter” opportunities into account.

In-person interviews by a parent champion or other volunteer who speaks the same language as the customer is one option. Consider incentives and marketing to build the level of customer feedback.

Identify information gaps and interests

Use feedback from customers to target education on

unfamiliar produce.

GFB Distribution

Weekly or biweekly (every other week) option, initially on Tuesdays; changed to Thursdays.

Provide options for frequency of a GFB

The majority of customers chose to receive the GFB on a weekly basis but up to one third favored the biweekly option.

This flexibility may enhance participation as client budgets or time constraints may preclude weekly orders.

Solicit feedback and adjust program accordingly

During the pilot, the distribution day was changed from early to later in the week (Tuesday to Thursday) based on client feedback.

A day closer to the weekend gave parents more time to cook from scratch and helped the partner agency as well since sourcing from local farmers is a time and logistically intensive process.

Getting information about client schedules up front can guide distribution day selection.

Ideally, more than one day for distribution could best accommodate varying client schedules.

Refugee and Immigrant Family Center GFB Program Details

Program Elements

Lessons Learned

Participation

Total # families: 80 Staff: 18

Planning, management, legal issues

A lateral engagement strategy was used in lieu of a top down approach.

The technical assistance agency partner devoted significant up-front time for research and consultation with all participants including child care agency staff, parents, volunteers, and a farm representative.

Four child care agency staff devoted a combined 12 hours per week during the program planning period. This was later reduced to four to five hours.

Informal interviews were conducted with parents to gather information about produce preferences.

Build in start-up and planning time

It's easy to underestimate time requirements. Once a program is established and staff buy-in is achieved, the number of hours required to operate the program are reduced.

Identify multiple program champions, a parent and staff member with decision-making capacity

Assign an activity to teachers as well, such as assisting with parent enrollment and leading field trips, to build momentum.

Work out key logistics with the farm representative

Have a thorough conversation about delivery logistics and needs, the dollar level minimum for produce purchases, specific produce specifications, and to establish a shared understanding of terms and language commonly used by farm and agency staff.

Marketing & outreach

Together with the technical assistance partner agencies, a robust marketing strategy was used to promote the GFB Program.

Examples include:

- A "community kitchens" launch event—held concurrently with school enrollment—at which participants gathered to learn and practice cooking with organic produce. Reminders in a regularly published newsletter.
- Teachers informed parents.
- Field trip to a farm-based fall harvest festival with a pumpkin growing-eating theme.
- A representative from the small farm from which produce was ordered came on site and set up a mock produce stand.
- Kids growing and harvesting produce in nearby pea patch.

Directly engage farmers

Build a relationship with the farm from which you order produce and organize events to build and sustain interest among parents and children.

Seek "critical mass" to reduce operations barriers.

When a large percentage of families participate, the need for continuous reminders about the program itself, costs, and GFB pick-up times dissolves. A holistic approach—when the GFB Program permeates agency activities—is key.

Be thoughtful about securing funding for field trips for kids.

Visits to farms, markets, and other venues generates enthusiasm and interest among kids and parents. Transportation costs, however, can be prohibitive. Be strategic about potential income sources to support these activities.

Produce orders

A partner agency set up the online ordering process and created a price list for the website after consulting with farmers.

Embed the GFB program into daily operations.

High levels of parent and staff involvement reduces risk of excess or missed orders because the program is top of mind.

Good Food Bag Pricing

Subsidized Price: \$6.00

Retail value was \$25–27.

Costs were covered via overall food budget for the agency and a small grant a nonprofit organization of women in the food industry.

Include GFB subsidy (or part of it) in budget for on-site meals and snacks.

In this way, the need to secure external funding is reduced.

Clients paid for their Good Food Bag in cash one week in advance of delivery. A petty cash allotment was used to make change.

Good Food Bag contents & preparation

Language-appropriate recipes and information about safe food handling practices in English and Spanish. were included in GFBs

Refrigeration

Cold storage for certain produce was used at the agency site as needed.

Food allergies

When preparing GFBs, staff checked enrollment information for the presence of food allergies and adjusted bag contents accordingly.

Volunteers for bagging

Parent volunteers participated, assembly-line style, in bagging produce.

Ensure that companion materials reflect cultural backgrounds and languages spoken by families.

Be aware of food allergies and sensitivities when filling GFBs

Use alternative produce as needed.

Bag type

Reusable bags were provided to the agency at no cost, later replaced by paper bags.

Sign up & payment collection

Teachers, on a rotating basis, enrolled families and provided names to designated staff.

Parents paid in cash one week ahead of GFB delivery.

Evaluation & monitoring

No formal evaluation was conducted. The technical assistance partner agency performed a monthly check-in to see how the program was progressing and assist with needed adjustments. Otherwise, parental feedback occurred informally.

Gather feedback from parents during normal course of business

Monthly gatherings, gardening activities, and other scheduled events are opportunities to gather feedback from parents.

GFB distribution

Bags were made available on a weekly basis.



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For more information about the Seattle Good Food Bag Pilot, contact Natalie Thomson, City of Seattle Human Services Department, Youth and Family Empowerment Division (206-684-0840 or Natalie.Thomson@seattle.gov).

